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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE Radio Service OFFICE OF INFORMATION

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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Tuesday, November 28, 1933.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "When Buying Blankets." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

--ooOoo--

It's question and answer day in the Housekeepers' Chat schedule. And today we're going to answer a variety of questions from women in this audience who want to know how they may determine values in buying blankets. I imagine they sent these questions to me because last year I gave you a number of comments on this subject from Miss Ruth O'Brien, the leader of the textile division in the Bureau of Home Economics at Washington. Well, I have referred the new lot of questions back to Miss O'Brien, asked her to bring her blanket-buying pointers up to date, and in that way answer all the various questions. Miss O'Brien has very kindly done this, and now I'm going to send you her remarks on the subject.

"We are still far away," Miss O'Brien says, "from the time when housewives can buy on specification like the purchasing agents for business concerns and Government departments and institutions.

"If you were a purchasing agent and were in the market for blankets, you would buy only blankets that passed certain scientific tests. These tests would show, among other things, what the scientists call the tensile strength and the heat conductivity of the blankets. You would buy the blankets which the tests showed would give you the greatest tensile strength, and the lowest heat conductivity for the money that you had to spend.

"But, of course, when you go to the store to buy a blanket you can't do as a purchasing agent does. To begin with, even if you had the specifications as to tensile strength and heat conductivity, you wouldn't have laboratory facilities to test these qualities in the blankets offered you. But, saying you did have laboratory facilities, you still couldn't afford to buy a number of blankets, cut them up and put them through the tests, in order to find out which one would give you the most service per dollar of cost.

"So in buying their blankets, homemakers must content themselves with information given on the labels, and obtained by applying certain practical tests that I shall outline for you today.

"The labels now give you more exact information on the wool content of blankets than they did a year ago, thanks to an agreement among the blanket manufacturers. This agreement went into effect for newly manufactured blankets last December 31st.

"Under these rules of the manufacturers themselves, you can depend upon labels for these facts:

"When the label says the blanket is all wool it contains 98 to 100 per cent wool.

"Only blankets containing at least 98 per cent wool will be labeled 'all wool'.

"Blankets containing from 25 to 98 per cent of wool will carry on the label a statement of the percentage of wool.

"No blanket containing less than 5 per cent wool can carry the word 'wool' on the label.

"Now cotton and wool blankets both have a place. Cotton blankets launder easily and do not felt or shrink so much as wool. They are stronger than most wool blankets and less expensive. For these reasons, some people prefer cotton blankets. Others prefer wool blankets, especially if they want warmth.

"Just a word or two on part-wool blankets. I know that many of you are watching costs and are therefore considering part-wool blankets. They are not as good as all-wool for warmth. But if a blanket has enough wool -- 25 per cent or more -- it will be warm, and the cotton will add strength. A good combination of the two fibers produces a good blanket.

"Very satisfactory blankets are woven from yarns with a center or 'core' of cotton covered with wool. This is a good way to combine the two fibers. Other blankets are woven with cotton warp and wool filling. One thing to remember in examining part-wool blankets is that cotton and wool shrink different amounts. Therefore, see that the fibers are combined in such a way that when this shrinkage takes place, the blanket will not pucker. It will, if wool stripes run through a fabric of cotton.

"Another point. The nap is important. The warmth of a blanket depends largely upon the density of its nap. However, the nap may be produced at the expense of the foundation yarns -- weakening them so much that the blanket will fall to pieces when laundered. If a blanket has an excessively high or long nap, look it over carefully to see that the foundation fabric is strong, and the yarns forming the nap are firmly bound into the foundation yarns.

"To judge the strength of the foundation fabric, push the nap inside and study the foundation just as you would any other material you were buying. Pull it between your hands. Hold it before a light and see if the foundation fabric looks thin and sleazy. Scratch the nap and see if the wool rubs off easily as lint. If it does, the wool fibers are too short.

"When buying 'bargain' blankets, use these tests to compare the bargains with the higher priced articles. Also be sure the 'bargain' blankets are as large as the others. If you find the bargain blankets to be as large and made of the same kind of fiber as the higher priced blankets, compare weights. The heavier blankets have more fiber in them. The weight indicates relative value. But don't give weight too much attention, since poorly napped heavy blankets are not so warm as lighter well-napped blankets.

"A final point. Be sure the binding is sturdy. A bow of cheap ribbon or a sleazy prettily colored silk binding often sells a blanket, but these don't stay pretty when you put the blanket to use. A strong sateen binding or a simple, strong, even and close blanket-stitched edge are the best buys.

"Well, some day, no doubt, blankets will be labeled with their tensile strength and their heat conductivity, and the homemaker can buy on specification. But today we have some guides. We can get from the label information on the size, the kind of fiber, and the weight. We can find how strong the blanket fabric is by applying the simple tests I have given you today. We can examine the bindings. By doing these things we can make purchases that will be more satisfactory and economical." (End of quoted comments of Miss Ruth O'Brien of the Bureau of Home Economics.

And now if Miss O'Brien in this message has not answered your questions on guides to values on buying blankets, send them in, and I'll try to get more specific answers.

Tomorrow: "Thanksgiving for the Youngsters."

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